

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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PRAYER AND PRUDENCE

The newspapers have just published an incident which perhaps illustrates our subject in the light in which we see it. An infant of three months, belonging to a certain family which believed that the prayer of faith must be relied upon for everything, was stricken with pneumonia, and died, notwithstanding the agonized supplications of the parents. No physician was called, and no treatment was given the child, and the malady which in its earlier stages might have yielded to the proper remedies, quickly ran its fatal course. We believe in prayer, and we believe in the efficacy of faith, but we also believe that God's providence has superintended the development of medical science, and that the ministrations of a good doctor are in the direct line of that providence, and is one of the effective means by which prayer for recovery is answered. Other illustrations of the same practical common sense in providential matters can be found. We are to pray for our daily bread, but at the same time "he who will not plow shall beg in harvest, and have nothing." Strong muscles and vigorous physical health are God's usual answers to the prayer for daily bread. He who sits down and waits for it to drop out of the sky is apt to grow lean. Bread must be compelled from the soil by labor, and not even Christ himself, tho possessing the power, would use it to avoid the usual providential process, by "commanding the stones to become bread." True, he miraculously increased the five loaves, but it was in a desert place where wheat could not grow, and so far from human habitations that the people could not beg or buy.

Where sanity is joined to piety, it is the universal experience that the watching goes with praying, and that prudence, the use of our faculties, the admonitions of our best judgment, the lessons of experience, the timely use of all providential agencies, are so essential to the prayer of faith that without them it is usually ineffective. We once heard of a case where a faith alone man decided to contribute ten dollars to a benevolent institution of the most worthy character. He had to send the money by mail, and it was in the days when a registered letter cost ten cents. Now the brother being at that time a "prayer and faith" man, reasoned with himself thusly: "This is the Lord's work, and this money I am sending is the Lord's money. He will therefore see it safely to its destination, and instead of spending ten cents to register the letter, I will enclose the

ten cents, and send it in a plain envelope like an ordinary letter." So it was sent, and the sender patiently awaited the acknowledgement which never came. The money never reached its destination. When the letter was mailed it was trustingly and expressly committed to the special providence of God, to see it safely to the end of its journey, but it never got there. Subsequent inquiry confirmed the distressing fact that it was stolen enroute, and went to swell the hoard of some mail thief. The brother made just the mistake which thousands of prayer of faith men are making all the time. In the case of this letter, the registry provision made by the Post Office Department of the United States government was the special providence ordained for the very purpose of seeing that money safely to its destination, and so far from committing it to the keeping of special providence, the brother distinctly took it *out* of the hands of special providence.

In all the matters of personal experience and daily living, the union of faith and works is just as essential as it is in the weightier matters of doctrine and salvation. There are certain characteristics of human nature which lovingly lean toward an effortless philosophy. Some very good people seem to think that the ideal life is like that of a birdling in the nest, who to get his daily provision has only to open his mouth and shut his eyes. There used to be in some quarters a pious idea about preaching somewhat similar to this illustration: "Open your mouth, and the Lord will fill it." Of course the Lord filled it, but the filling was apt to be atmospheric air. The sermons under this regime were like a desert, the wide, barren waste here and there relieved by the unexpected spouting of a solitary and reluctant "idee." An effective filling of the mouth must come thru the eye, ear, brain, heart, the diligent employment of every faculty. He who chops with a dull ax because turning the grindstone is hard work, will pray in vain for a big pile of wood.

God does not require us to use all our physical, mental and spiritual powers on the theory that he needs our assistance, but on another and very important hypothesis that *we* need the development of these powers. He doesn't want to people heaven with milk-sops. He takes delight in sturdy, sensible and self reliant natures. A sensible father likes for his son to believe in him, but he also likes to see him manfully strike out on his own hook when he comes of age. It's good for the boy. Persevering Prudence is nearest of kin to Prevailing Prayer. The firm of Trust & Try are doing the most successful business that we know anything about.